

# **THE EFFECTS OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION, EUSTRESS, JOB SATISFACTION ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

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**THE EFFECTS OF ELECTRONIC  
COMMUNICATION, EUSTRESS, JOB  
SATISFACTION ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

by

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"Enthusiastic employees excel in their work because they maintain the balance between the energy they give and the energy they receive."

**Prof. dr. Arnold B. Bakker**

## **DEDICATION**

To ....

My father's soul who urged me to work hard in order to be a successful man.

My mother who always prays for me to lead a happy life.

My wife who supports me to achieve my goals.

My daughters, Wasan, Asia, and Sarah who give meaning for my life.

My sons, Suleiman, Ali, and Abdullah whom I hope to contribute to spreading peace around the world.

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# **KESAN KOMUNIKASI ELEKTRONIK, EUSTRESS, KEPUASAN KERJA TERHADAP PENGLIBATAN PEKERJA**

## **ABSTRAK**

Penglibatan pekerja adalah faktor penting dalam menentukan kejayaan sesuatu organisasi. Penglibatan pekerja dapat menjana prestasi cemerlang serta mengurangkan niat untuk berhenti kerja. Walaubagaimanapun dalam kebanyakan industri, penglibatan pekerja merupakan satu cabaran utama. Kajian ini dijalankan bertujuan untuk menentukan hubungan antara komunikasi secara elektronik iaitu penggunaan e-mel yang efektif, penggunaan *Facebook*, penggunaan *Twitter* dengan *eustress*, kepuasan kerja dan penglibatan pekerja (kecerdasan, dedikasi dan serapan). Kajian ini menghipotesis bahawa kecerdasan emosi menjadi pembolehubah pemoderat antara komunikasi elektronik iaitu penggunaan e-mel yang efektif, penggunaan *Facebook*, penggunaan *Twitter* dengan *eustress* dan penglibatan pekerja. Data telah dikumpul daripada 482 pekerja yang dipilih secara rambang melalui Kementerian Pelajaran Oman. Perisian 'SmartPLS' telah digunakan untuk menguji pemodelan persamaan struktur hubungan antara pembolehubah. Seterusnya kajian ini menggunakan 'PROCESS macro' untuk menentukan kesan perantara. Berdasarkan analisis yang dijalankan, terdapat hubungan positif yang signifikan antara penggunaan *Facebook* dengan penglibatan pekerja. Analisis juga mengesahkan hubungan positif yang signifikan antara penggunaan twitter dengan salah satu sahaja elemen penglibatan pekerja iaitu dedikasi. Hipotesis yang mengaitkan hubungan antara penggunaan twitter dengan dua lagi elemen penglibatan pekerja (kecerdasan dan serapan) tidak disokong. Seterusnya, penggunaan email didapati mempunyai hubungan yang positif dengan kecerdasan dan serapan tetapi penggunaan email didapati tidak mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan dedikasi. Kajian ini juga



mendapati komunikasi elektronik (penggunaan email yang efektif, penggunaan *Facebook* dan penggunaan *Twitter*) memberi kesan terhadap eustress dan eustress seterusnya memberi kesan terhadap kepuasan kerja. Analisis turut mendapati hanya penggunaan email yang efektif memberi kesan positif yang signifikan terhadap kepuasan kerja manakala penggunaan *Facebook* dan penggunaan *Twitter* tidak memberi kesan yang signifikan terhadap kepuasan kerja. Seterusnya kajian mendapati kepuasan kerja telah meningkatkan kecerdasan, dedikasi dan serapan di tempat kerja. Kajian ini seterusnya mendapati eustress bertindak sebagai perantara dalam hubungan komunikasi elektronik (penggunaan email yang efektif, penggunaan *Facebook*, penggunaan *Twitter*) dengan kepuasan kerja. Kepuasan kerja pula bertindak sebagai perantara dalam hubungan eustress dengan penglibatan pekerja. Implikasi dan cadangan untuk kajian pada masa hadapan turut dibincangkan dalam kajian ini.

# **THE EFFECTS OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION, EUSTRESS, JOB SATISFACTION ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

## **ABSTRACT**

Employee engagement is the cornerstone for any organization's success. It fosters employee's performance and alleviates employee's intention to turnover. However, it is the major challenge for many industries. The purpose of the study is to investigate the influence of electronic communication (email effectiveness, Facebook usage and Twitter usage) on eustress, job satisfaction and employee engagement. It also hypothesizes that eustress increases job satisfaction and job satisfaction increases employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption). Further this research also investigates the mediating effects of eustress between electronic communication (email effectiveness, Facebook usage and Twitter usage) and job satisfaction and the mediating effects of job satisfaction on the relationship between eustress and employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption). Data were collected from 483 employees chosen randomly from Ministry of Education in Oman. SmartPLS based SEM is used to test the relationships between variables. Furthermore PROCESS macro is used to discover the mediation effects. The analysis revealed a positive significant relationship between Facebook usage and employee engagement. It also confirmed a positive significant relationship between Twitter usage and dedication; whereas, it failed to support the hypothesized relationships between twitter usage and vigor, absorption. Further, email effectiveness at work relates positively with vigor and absorption; while it unveiled non-significant relationship between email effectiveness at work and dedication. Electronic communication (email effectiveness, Facebook usage and Twitter usage) enhances eustress, and eustress enhances job

satisfaction. Moreover, the results indicate that email effectiveness has a positive significant relationship with job satisfaction; whereas, Facebook and Twitter usages do not influence job satisfaction significantly. Further, job satisfaction increases vigor, dedication and absorption at work. The results also indicate that eustress mediates the relationship between electronic communication (email effectiveness, Facebook usage, Twitter usage) and job satisfaction, and job satisfaction mediates the relationship between eustress and employee engagement. Implications and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Employee engagement has become a global concern. For example, Cook and Green (2011) stated that Gallup found that in an average company, 20% of employees are actively disengaged, 50% are not engaged, and 30% are engaged. Likewise, Buhler (2006) found that 70% of United States workforce is not engaged. Actually, disengaged employees are more likely to perform poorly or leave their organization which means that the organization loses abilities, skills, and core knowledge. Subsequently, the organization spends more on employment and the selection process; for example, the employee exit and turnover cost were over 600,000 pound by end of year 2006 in Kia motors (Tomlinson, 2010).

In Oman employee engagement has become a major challenge for industry. Anonymous (2011) discussed the challenges that the oil sector faces in Oman such as talented employees start leaving to other businesses and others start striking claiming that the incentives provided for them are not enough compared to the other businesses (Grey, 2011). Shaibany (2011) reported that Oman air employees strike as well demanding for higher pay. Similarly, workers from Rusayl industrial estate demand pay rises as they protest and block the road to the estate that force all 150 industrial units to stop their activities (Vaidya, 2011).

The Ministry of Education in Oman also faced with the problem of declining employees' engagement. Esan et al. (2011) conducted a study over a sample from the ministry of education to find out the reasons behind the teachers' absenteeism in Oman which is associated with low levels of employees' engagement. They found

that job dissatisfaction, inefficiency of teachers' preparation programs, school facilities, vagueness of rules and regulations, social, family, and health conditions are the main reasons of teachers' absenteeism. In another study Al-Neimi and Amzat (2012) revealed that turnover rates in the teaching profession in Oman go up as a result of work overload and low income. Another challenge that the ministry of education faces is when a group of teachers demonstrated against ministry of education for a higher pension contributions and large allowances for water, electricity and housing as well as promotions procedures that ended with the closure of a number of schools across the country (Worrall, 2012). In 2011 a group of teachers from Rustaq and Sohar cities in Oman started a strike demanding for more rights and incentives for teachers; for example reasonable workload, and modern adequate facilities such as well-equipped offices that foster their performance (Ser Al Janub, 2011; Al-Belushi, 2011).

Issan and Gomaa (2010) stated that the ministry of education in the sultanate of Oman has adopted a new policy which is integrating technology in education and promotes vocational training as to meet the labour market requirements and to enter the global economy. The reform policy requires innovative minds that are engaged in performing their roles. However, organizational change efforts and competitive advantage are more likely to fail if employees are not willing to promote discretionary effort (Maylett & Nielsen, 2012). Maylett and Nielsen (2012) asserted that engagement is a key factor for the ability to learn, change, and adapt.

Therefore, any organization that wants to gain a competitive advantage and achieve its objectives should have employees who involve themselves physically, emotionally and cognitively in conducting their roles (Seijts & Crim, 2006; Benoit-

Williams, 2011; Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004) and feel aligned with the vision of the organization (Loehr & Schwartz, 2004).

Examining factors that influence employees' engagement may develop an understanding of workplace behaviour. The results would be of a great benefit for any organization to gain the maximum efforts of its employees and to overcome the challenges it faces.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

Ministry of Education in Oman concerns about the lack of its employees' engagement; for example, Esan et al. (2011) study showed that Omani employees' absenteeism from work had increased. Al-Neimi and Amzat (2012) have found that turnover rate in teaching process has gone up. Worrall (2012) also reported that strikes in teaching field hit many areas in Oman. At the same time, Chapman et al. (2012) found that nearly half of individuals who work in teaching field in Oman are not committed to their jobs and express lower satisfaction which affects their intention to stay in their jobs. Similarly, Al Lawati (2014) stated that some qualified teachers in educational field in Oman experience low job satisfaction which lead them to quit their jobs. Therefore, focusing on employee engagement in teaching field in Oman is of a great value.

Many studies showed that organizations need engaged employees who are energetic, dedicated, and responsible for their own professional development and committed to high optimal performance that enhances competitive success (Bakker & Leiter, 2010; Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Richman, 2006). Bakker (2008) and Schaufeli et al. (2001) described engaged employees as optimistic and self-efficacious who can cope actively with different situations. They perform better

than others because they experience better health and positive emotions like happiness, enthusiasm, and joy. They create their own job and personal resources, and transfer engagement to others. Employee engagement should be a strategic goal for every organisation (Binder, 2012).

A number of factors that contribute to employee engagement have already been identified and empirically verified. Some of these factors include rewards and recognition (Suan, 2009; Rini Wati, 2010), participation in decision making (Chen, 2007; May et al., 2004), support of supervisor, job autonomy, performance feedback, empathetic attitudes of supervisors, psychological meaningfulness, psychological availability (Rothmann & Rothmann Jr, 2010), work role fit, organizational support (Ram & Prabhakar, 2011), growth opportunities, innovativeness (Bakker et al., 2007), individual characteristics (Kong, 2009), personality characteristics (Thomas, 2011), information appreciation, organizational climate, procedural justice (Saks, 2006), job design (Attridge, 2009), trait competitiveness, self-efficacy, organisation policies and practices (Muller, 2009), leadership behaviours, task variety (Smulders, 2006), internal communication and communication styles of leaders (Hayase, 2009; Greenidge, 2010; Muller, 2009; Suan, 2009; Vaijayanthi et al., 2011).

However, as technology advances, new means of communication have been introduced, for example emails, and social networks (facebook and twitter). Recently, Ministry of Education introduced educational portal that motivates employees to communicate through email and social networks (Appendix A, B). Therefore, the study emphasizes the role of electronic communication (email effectiveness, facebook usage, twitter usage) on increasing employee engagement. Drussell (2012) reported that individuals shift to use social networking sites for communication among them at a very high rate. Some studies (Hornung, 2005;

Fallows, 2002; Whitty & Carr, 2006; O'kane & Hargie, 2007; Hewitt, 2006) revealed the effectiveness of communication through email in organisations. Similarly various studies provided an evidence of the importance of using social networks (facebook and twitter) to enhance communication and interaction in organisations (Hughes et al., 2012; Hutchings, 2012; Hopkins, 2012; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Fischer & Reuber, 2011).

However, Munene and Nyaribo (2013) found that social networks can affect employee's productivity negatively if it is not managed well. Turel and Serenko (2010) believed that email usage interrupts employee performance as well. All the above studies provide an evidence about the consequences of electronic communication on organization performance, considered here as positive or negative performance. These studies however, are not able to provide insight on the types of the relationships between electronic communication tools and job attitude. Therefore, this study would like to examine the effectiveness of using email at work, and the influence of communication via facebook and twitter in relations to employee engagement and job satisfaction.

Although organizations introduce new communication technology as to have more efficient work and improve employees' working lives, sometimes it causes stress at workplace (Ayyagari et al., 2011; Day et al., 2012). Job stress is a global problem in which many employees feel stressed that deteriorates their performance. Jehangir et al. (2011) stated that "job stress is increasingly becoming an epidemic in the work environment". Hashim et al. (2012) stated that occupational stress is one of the greatest challenges that organizations face. Too much to be done or sometimes too little demand from employees lead to distress. So far, it has been found that distress affects employee engagement negatively (Setti & Argentero, 2011; Garrosa



et al., 2011; Lawrence, 2011; Landrum et al., 2012). It decreases workplace successes (Hilton & Whiteford, 2010), leads to depression (Siegrist, 2008) and mental and emotional strain (Von Onciul, 1996). It affects the organisation and its employees negatively (Panzaru & Stefanescu, 2012; Lennartsson et al., 2013). Further, Stress affects organisation's bottom line (Loveday, 2012), and organisation's production and increases sickness payments (Cooper, 2001).

However, there are situations where the amount of stress is between too much or too little which causes good stress (eustress). It is considered fundamental for work success (Le Fevre et al., 2003). Eustress keeps employees motivated, and makes them alert, energetic, confident, and responsive in an appropriate manner (Stewart, 2006). Polson (2009) insisted that eustress enhances individuals' abilities to function well through activating their resources to meet challenges and achieve goals. There are some studies revealed a positive relationship between electronic communication (email, social networking sites) and, individual health and eustress (Gerich, 2014; Fiorillo & Sabatini, 2011; Guo et al., 2014; Kushlev & Dunn, 2015). Also, it has been found that eustress enhances job satisfaction positively (jarinto, 2011; Mansoor et al., 2011). Therefore, eustress is supposed to be enhanced by electronic communication and mediates the relationship between electronic communication and job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is another important factor at the workplace. Abdullah et al. (2012) stated that job satisfaction is a key issue when the concern is about employees' behaviours and attitudes. A meta-analysis study by Faragher et al. (2005) found that job satisfaction influences employees' health greatly and therefore counsellors should explore ways to strengthen employees' job satisfaction. Job satisfaction enhances employees' performance (Fachrunnisa et al., 2014; Abdullah et

al., 2012; Springer, 2011). Many studies revealed that job satisfaction influences employee engagement greatly in which it makes them immerse at work physically, cognitively, and emotionally (Lewis et al., 2011; Clifford, 2011; Avery et al., 2007; Simpson, 2009).

Further, some previous researches concluded that job satisfaction acts as a mediator between some work-related variables such as emotional intelligence and organisational commitment (Guleryuz et al., 2008), employees' perceptions of justice and work performance (Suliman, 2007), caring climate and job performance (Fu & Deshpande, 2014). Therefore, job satisfaction might play a major role on the relationship between eustress and employee engagement. So this study examines the mediating effects of job satisfaction on the relationship between eustress and employee engagement.

Empirical evidence is required to understand employees' engagement so that employers and managers can apply effective strategies to improve their employees' performance. As Albrecht (2010) claimed that "There is a necessity for further exploration for factors that affect employee engagement." Thus this research would shed a light on factors contribute to employee engagement specifically pertaining to Oman country. Apart from understanding the factors that contribute to employee engagement, gaining understanding of the role of eustress and job satisfaction in such relationship enables employer to find ways to increase employee engagement in the workplace.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The literature reveals there is a relationship between electronic communication, and eustress (Gerich, 2014; Fiorillo & Sabatini, 2011; Guo et al., 2014; Kushlev &

Dunn, 2015), and positive work outcomes such as job satisfaction (Haggerty, 2009; Liu et al., 2005; Abugre, 2011; Van Beek et al., 2011) and employee engagement (Hornung, 2005; Fallows, 2002; Whitty & Carr, 2006; O'kane & Hargie, 2007). Therefore, in attempt to bridge the gap in the literature, this research investigates the effect of electronic communication (email, facebook, twitter) on eustress, job satisfaction and employee engagement. It also proposes that eustress can play a mediating role between electronic communication and job satisfaction. The consistent relationship between eustress and job satisfaction (jarinto, 2011; Swody, 2006), and job satisfaction and employee engagement (Lewis et al., 2011; Clifford, 2011; Avery et al., 2007; Simpson, 2009) indicates that job satisfaction can play a mediating role on the relationship. Therefore, the main purpose of the study is to investigate the influence of electronic communication (email, facebook and twitter) on eustress, job satisfaction and employee engagement. Further this research also investigates the mediating effects of eustress between electronic communication and job satisfaction and the mediating effects of job satisfaction on the relationship between eustress and employee engagement. Thus, the objectives of the study are:

- 1- To investigate the relationship between electronic communication (email effectiveness, facebook usage, twitter usage), and eustress, job satisfaction, employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption).
- 2- To examine the relationship between eustress and job satisfaction.
- 3- To examine the mediating role of eustress on the relationship between electronic communication (email effectiveness, facebook usage, twitter usage) and job satisfaction.
- 4- To examine the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption).

- 5- To examine the mediating role of job satisfaction on the relationship between eustress and employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption).

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The study attempts to answer the following questions in order to fill the gap in the literature.

1. Is there any relationship between electronic communication (email effectiveness, facebook usage, twitter usage), and eustress, job satisfaction, employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption)?
2. Is there any relationship between eustress and job satisfaction?
3. Does eustress mediate the relationship between between electronic communication (email effectiveness, facebook usage, twitter usage) and job satisfaction?
4. Is there any relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption)?
5. Does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between between eustress and employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption)?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

The issues of employee engagement have been raised among scholars since it increases employees' productivity. This study focuses on five issues that are (i) to test the relationship between electronic communication (email effectiveness, facebook usage, twitter usage), and eustress, job satisfaction, and employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption), (ii) to test the relationship between eustress and job satisfaction, (iii) to test the mediating effects of eustress on the relationship between electronic communication (email effectiveness, facebook usage,

twitter usage) and job satisfaction, (iv) to test the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption), and (v) to test the mediating effects of job satisfaction on the relationship between eustress and employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption). By applying conservation of resources theory (COR), this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge specifically on electronic communication and eustress.

Communication in any organization creates a pleasant atmosphere that makes everybody believes in the organization's vision and goals, and consequently works hard to achieve its strategic goals. Upper level management communicates organisation vision and goals to employees using various mode of communication. Thus by studying these variables, this research would provide information about the impact of electronic communication when using email, facebook and twitter on facilitating eustress at work and increasing job satisfaction and employees' engagement in an Omani context.

The findings of the research provide insights for education decision makers and administrators about dealing with some of the challenges they face in their organization such as the increasing percentages of employees' absenteeism (Esan et al., 2011), and poor performance of some employees. Further, the findings might open new dimensions for the employers to foster and enhance the performance of engaged ones so that they would be encouraged to keep up their efforts. They may benefit from the results of this study through implementing strategies for change that would improve employees' engagement which should be a part of daily work.

Moreover, the study generates new knowledge pertaining the factors that affect employee engagement. Human resources managers would benefit from the results of the study by considering the investigated variables (electronic

communication, eustress, job satisfaction) when addressing employees' engagement in Oman. They are more likely to consider the variables when designing engagement programmes and in the employment process.

During difficult economic times, considering employees engagement is very crucial to achieve balance within the organization (Sara, 2011). So, the findings provide additional guidance for those who seek to implement strategies for engaging employees during their hard times. Further, this study provides insights about the applicability of conservation of resources (COR) theory in a different cultural context which is Oman. The study might also indicate future research directions.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study is limited to the ministry of education employees from post-basic schools in the directorate general of education, Batinah North region because it has the biggest number of post basic schools and teachers as well as it has an excellent network coverage compared to other regions in the Sultanate of Oman.

### **1.7 Definitions of Key Terms**

Definitions of the key terms of the study are presented here:

#### **Employee Engagement**

Albrecht (2010) viewed engagement as "A positive work-related psychological state (reflected in words like enthusiasm, energy, passion, and vigor) and it is also a motivational state reflected in a genuine willingness to invest focused effort toward organizational goals and success." In this study employee engagement refers to the employee's high energy and willingness to exert effort on the job, strong involvement in work with pride, and being absorbed and immersed by work.

**Vigor:** high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties (Schaufeli et al., 2002a).

**Dedication:** being strongly involved in one's work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge (Schaufeli et al., 2002a).

**Absorption:** being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work (Schaufeli et al., 2002a).

## **Communication**

Communication is "the degree to which information is transmitted among the members of an organization (Price, 1997)." Electronic communication means communicating with others via electronic devices. In this study, electronic communication means communication among employees, between employees and supervisors, managers, administrators and vice versa through email, facebook and twitter for the purpose of information exchange and socialisation.

**Email effectiveness:** The effectiveness of using email at work in enhancing communication among employees, improving teamwork, saving time, and keeping employees informative about current events.

**Facebook usage:** communication through facebook for informational purposes and socialisation.

**Twitter usage:** communication through twitter for informational purposes and socialisation.

## **Eustress**

Eustress is the "amount of stress between too much or too little, an optimal level of stress, Le Fevre et al., 2003". O'sullivan (2011) defined eustress as the positive psychological response to a stressor that motivates employees to challenge the difficulties they face and to have a sense of achievement. It is an employee's ability to cope effectively and successfully with stressful situations. This study adapts O'sullivan definition so as it is consistent with the purpose of the study and eustress scale that measures the study samples' characteristics.

## **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is "the emotional reaction a worker has towards his/her job after a comparison of the outputs he/she expects or desires with real outputs" (Cranny et al., 1992).

## **1.8 Structure of the thesis**

This chapter covers issues that introduce the context of the research such as background of the study, research problem, objectives, research questions, and significance of the study. To discuss further insight of the research, the thesis includes the following chapters:

**Chapter Two:** reviews literature regarding the variables of the study (employee engagement, electronic communication, facebook, twitter, email, eustress, and job satisfaction) and relevant theory to identify gaps. Based on gaps in the literature and theory, a conceptual framework and hypotheses are formulated.

**Chapter Three:** includes a discussion on the research paradigm and design. It describes population and sampling technique. The study instruments are described in details. The chapter also describes reliability and validity of the questionnaires, translation of the questionnaire, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques.

**Chapter Four:** explains the analysis and results of study variables. Firstly, SPSS is employed at the first stage to edit and code data; then, structural equation modelling



technique (Partial Least Squares software) is used to detect direct effects. Process macro written by Andrew F. Hayes is used to calculate mediating effects.

**Chapter Five:** discusses the results, implications, and limitations. Suggestions for future researches are presented.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The current study tests the relationship between electronic communication (email effectiveness, facebook usage, twitter usage) at work and eustress, job satisfaction, employee engagement and the mediating effects of eustress on the relationship between electronic communication and job satisfaction and the mediating effects of job satisfaction on the relationship between eustress and employee engagement. Therefore, this chapter reviews literature pertaining employee engagement and other related constructs to the research. It starts with a detailed explanation of employee engagement, its relevance to the other organizational behaviour constructs, some examined models, factors that influence employee engagement and the impact of employee engagement on organizations. Relevant literature related to the other constructs (electronic communication, eustress, and job satisfaction) are also presented. It highlights the gaps in the literature and the hypothesized conceptual framework. It includes a detailed explanation of how conservation of resources theory provides a clear understanding of the hypotheses of the research.

##### **2.1.1 Employee Engagement Overview**

Employee engagement research has emerged from positive psychology that concerns about positive behaviours within organizations like job motivation, empowerment, and organizational citizenship behaviours (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999; Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000; Chang-wook, 2011; Ludwig & Frazier, 2012). There are various definitions of employee engagement in the academic and

practitioner fields due to the differences in approaches, models, and theories, and there is still considerable debate over what engagement is (Albrecht, 2010). The concept of employee engagement was developed first by Kahn in 1990 (Harter et al., 2002; Shuck, 2011) in his work on summer camp employees and architecture firm employees. Kahn (1990) defined employee engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles." He stated that in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. Kahn stated that the physical domain of employee engagement is related to physical energies exerted by employees to perform their duties; whereas, the cognitive domain concerns employees' beliefs about an organization, its leaders and working conditions. The emotional domain of employee engagement is related to employees' feelings towards organization, its leaders and working conditions; and their attitudes toward those three factors. Likewise, Baumruk (2004) defined employees' engagement as their emotional and intellectual commitment to their organization.

Schaufeli et al. (2002a) offered a definition for employee engagement which is widely used in the studies. They view engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication is characterized by being strongly involved in one's work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work. In this study, Schaufeli et al. (2002) definition is

adopted because ministry of education employees are considered engaged if they have the willingness to exert their efforts to accomplish tasks, being proud in involving doing tasks, and they work happily with inspiration which results in positive organisational outcomes like productivity and profitability.

Moreover, different studies use different terminologies like employee engagement, job engagement, and organization engagement. Saks (2006) and Andrew and Sofian (2012) proposed that both job engagement and organization engagement are part of employee engagement, but they sometimes differ in their antecedents. For example, job characteristics are an antecedent for job engagement; and procedural justice is an antecedent for organization engagement, while perceived organizational support is an antecedent for job and organization engagement. On the other hand, Fleck et al. (2010) argued that job engagement is the "task-related side of engagement" in which employees losing themselves when performing the roles cognitively; whereas, organization engagement is the "organization-related side of engagement" in which employees' views and directions are aligned with organisation's views. However, Fleck et al. (2010) claimed that some behaviours like exerting one's effort, going extra-mile, and being an optimistic advocate for organization are related to both job and organization engagement. However, Remo (2012) argued that concepts like work engagement, self engagement, job engagement, organizational engagement, personal engagement, and employee engagement are used interchangeably.

Further, Maslach and Leiter (2008), Crawford et al. (2010) and Thompson (2013) viewed engagement as the opposite of burnout. Engaged employees are energetic, involved, and professionally efficacious, which are direct opposites of burnout dimensions: exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness. Likewise, Schaufeli

et al. (2001), Poulsen et al., (2011), and Cole et al., (2012) found that employee engagement and burnout scales are negatively and significantly correlated.

Although it seems that there is not any universal agreement about employee engagement definition, most of the studies emphasize that employee engagement encompasses employee's emotional, physical, intellectual, and motivational states that drive him to exert his efforts to contribute to organizational success.

### **2.1.2 The Difference between Employee Engagement, Organizational Commitment, Job Involvement, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Job Satisfaction**

Saks (2006) proposed that although employee engagement is related to other constructs in organizational behaviour, it is different from them. He argued that organisational commitment is different from engagement in which it relates to individual's attitudinal behaviours and the degree of attachment to the organization; whereas engagement relates to individual's degree of absorption in doing their duties. Moreover, engagement is different from job involvement in which it involves using emotions and behaviours besides cognition. Further, there is a distinct between organizational citizen behaviour and employee engagement in which the former includes voluntary and informal behaviours, but engagement mainly focuses on the individual's role behaviour.

Albrecht (2010), Alvi et al. (2014), and Louison (2008) identified that employee engagement, organizational commitment, job involvement, and job satisfaction are all unique constructs that have special theoretical and practical attention globally as well as unique measures and definitions, but they all referred to each other and have positive work-related psychological states.

Maylett and Nielsen (2012) argued that engagement includes three factors which are satisfaction, motivation, and effectiveness. Likewise, Schohat and Vigoda-Gadot (2010) stated that employee engagement is "a realignment of old constructs" such as organizational commitment, job involvement, and organizational citizen behaviour.

However, Kompaso and Sridevi (2010) argued that employee engagement is a unique construct that is built on the earlier concepts such as job satisfaction, employee commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviour, and it is broader and a strong predictor of organizational performance than earlier constructs in which it is a two way mutual process between the employee and employer. Similarly, Loehr et al. (2003) stated that engagement is more than job satisfaction, job commitment and job involvement. They believed that "engagement requires drawing on four separate but related sources of energy: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual." In this study, engaged employees are those who have high level of energy and persistent in face of difficulties. They experience sense of enthusiasm while performing their duties and feel proud of their work.

### **2.1.3 Significance of Employee Engagement in the Workplace**

Employee engagement is considered the cornerstone for success (Macey et al., 2009), productivity (Desai et al., 2010; Chen , 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007; Maylett & Nielsen, 2012; Shafer, 2010), safety, customer satisfaction, employee retention, quality of the products (Muller, 2009; Haid & Sims, 2009), performance such as profitability, revenue growth, employee turnover, and earnings per share (Albrecht, 2010), organizational innovation, effectiveness, and competitiveness (Welch, 2011).

If any organization is willing to keep its stronghold in the market, it must develop its human capital and keep them engaged. Engagement promises to yield new perspectives on interventions to alleviate burnout (Maslach et al., 2001) and an employee's intention to turnover (Shuck, 2010). According to Lockwood (2007) and Adi (2012) high levels of engagement in local and international firms contribute to talented employees' retention, foster customer loyalty, increase organizational performance, and improve stakeholder value.

Certainly, engaged employees lead to increased return on assets, higher earning and performance of employees, greater sales growth, and lower absenteeism. It is also associated with reducing costs, turnover, and decreasing quality errors (Banks, 2006; Harter et al., 2002; Salanova et al., 2005). Macey et al. (2009) asserted that companies that have highly engaged employees are more likely to create high levels of shareholder value and decrease the risk profile of the organization. Robertson and Cooper (2010) argued that employee engagement leads to employee well-being. Ludwig and Frazier (2012) stated that engagement contributes to growth, lower costs and absenteeism. Bakker et al. (2006) concluded that engaged principals are considered as transformational leaders who can inspire, stimulate, and coach their co-workers. So obviously, critical business outcomes are affected greatly by employee engagement (Heger, 2007). Therefore, employee engagement should be a strategic goal for all organisations.

#### **2.1.4 Models of Employee Engagement**

Previous studies have adopted different approaches and models to identify the factors that influence employee engagement. Shuck (2011) mentioned that the first approach of engagement theory was proposed by Khan in 1990. Kahn (1990) was influenced by sociologist Goffman's work in 1961 who theorized about how people

are different in their roles attachment and detachment. However, Khan argued that there should be another concept to fit with the organisational setting. He developed the terms engagement and disengagement (Kular et al., 2008). Kahn (1990) conducted two qualitative studies on two different organizations for the purpose of exploring the psychological conditions that engage or disengage employees at work. Three factors were identified which are: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Employees are willing to have meaningful work, provided with resources that contribute to the fulfilment of tasks, and feel safe when involving themselves in the work.

Another approach, which was proposed by Bakker and Demerouti in 2007, is called the job demand-resources model of engagement. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) assumed that job resources and personal resources play a salient role when individuals face high job demands such as work pressure, emotional, mental, and physical demands and lead to employee engagement which in turn results in higher performance. Examples of job resources are autonomy, social support from supervisors and colleagues, performance feedback, and skill variety; and examples of personal resources include optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, and self-esteem

Marciano (2010) proposed another model for engagement called RESPECT Model. The philosophy of this model is that when employees are respected, they are more likely to engage and exert their efforts to achieve the organization's goals. They show respect towards the organization's mission, vision, values, goals, policies, and actions. They also display respect to their supervisors, team members, and the work environment. Employees feel respected by other members of the organization as well. According to Marciano (2010), there are seven drivers that influence employees' engagement:



- i. Recognition (supervisors appreciate and acknowledge the contributions of their employees).
- ii. Empowerment (Employees are supported with required resources, tools and training to perform their duties well).
- iii. Supportive feedback (Employees are supported with a timely, specific feedback in a sincere, supportive, constructive manner).
- iv. Partnering (Management and team members cooperate together to achieve common goals).
- v. Expectations (Employees are provided with clear goals, objectives and business priorities).
- vi. Consideration (Supervisors should concern about their employees' problems and personal lives and support them to overcome their problems).
- vii. Trust (Supervisors trust and demonstrate confidence in their employees' skills and abilities).

Obviously, different models have been proposed to identify the drivers of employee engagement and all of them contribute to the enhancement of employee engagement. Bakker and Demerouti's model is widely used and elaborated in many studies (Chen, 2007; Menguc et al., 2012; Remo, 2012; Rashid et al., 2011; Ram & Prabhakar, 2011; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007; Bakker et al., 2007; Shuck et al., 2011; Tomlinson, 2010; Desai et al., 2010; Muller, 2009) because it investigates the role of job and personal resources in facing job demands and enhancing employees' engagement. In this study, job demand-resources model of engagement is elaborated in which electronic communication can be considered as job resources that alleviate stress among employees. Ministry of education facilitates communication via email, facebook and twitter that helps employees overcome stressful situations as they are

able to inquire about ambiguous roles and share information easily and therefore become satisfied and engaged at work.

### **2.1.5 Factors that Influence Employee Engagement**

Several studies have discussed various factors that influence employee engagement. For example, Chen (2007) examined the relationship between employee engagement and some job related factors over a foreign-invested company in China that applied an internet- based survey. The results showed that financial rewards and participation in decision-making, support of supervisor, job autonomy and performance feedback play a critical role in increasing employees' engagement.

Employee engagement has been examined in banking sector. For instance, Rashid et al. (2011) investigated 250 employees in Private commercial banks of Pakistan. The results reveal that decision making/co-ordination, performance reward systems, employee involvement, training and career development and employee performance appraisals influence employee engagement. Similarly, Sardar et al. (2011) examined the influence of HR practices on employee engagement in Pakistan's banking sector. The study revealed a significant relationship between decision making, co-ordination, performance reward systems, employee involvement and employee engagement. In Canada, Remo (2012) collected data from 273 accountant professionals and the data analysis showed that job characteristics affect employee engagement positively.

Carter (2010) conducted a study on employees from Australian retail financial services business and found that self-efficacy increases employees' engagement. Lelchhook (2012) also surveyed 327 individuals from retail organizations in the Midwest United States and found that leadership styles of authentic, transformational, and transactional leadership do not affect employee

engagement. Further, Menguc et al. (2012) found that supervisory feedback correlates positively with employees' engagement as they surveyed 482 service employees and customers in 66 retail stores.

Some studies investigated employee engagement in hotel industry. For example, Ram and Prabhakar (2011) examined the factors that influence employee engagement of 310 individuals in Jordanian hotel industry. The results showed that there is a relationship between employee engagement and the following factors: perceived organizational support, job characteristics, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, perceived supervisor support, perceived procedural and distributive justice. Likewise, Karatepe and Olugbade (2009) tested the effects of supervisor support, trait competitiveness, and self-efficacy on work engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption). The respondents were a group of full-time employees from four and five star hotels of Abuja. The results revealed that trait competitiveness enhanced employees' engagement (employees' feelings of vigor, dedication, and absorption), whereas self-efficacy influenced only absorption. Unexpectedly supervisor support did not have any effects on the three dimensions of work engagement. Also, Lee (2012) examined 394 hotel employees and managers in the United States and found that core self-evaluations, managerial support for service, interdepartmental service, and team communication influence employee engagement positively.

Shuck (2010) investigated the relationship between job fit, affective commitment, and psychological climate and employee engagement. A survey of six scales was applied on 283 employees from various organizations: service, technology, healthcare, retail, banking, nonprofit, and hospitality. The results indicated that job fit, affective commitment, and psychological climate were all significantly linked to employee engagement. Shafer (2010) has also conducted a qualitative study over a